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ABSTRACT

This study surveys 107 foreign language departments in secondary schools in western New York and identifies duties and practices of those responsible for the departmental leadership. The report also determines the amount of released time granted to perform departmental duties. The educational preparation and work experience of supervisory staff are reviewed. Responses to 92 questions used in the survey are tabulated. (RL)

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THE DEPARTMENT HEAD: A SURVEY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

by

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In the last ten years the increased enrollment in the secondary public schools caused a need for departmental leadership. The large high schools involved many administrative and supervisory duties that principals could not carry out efficiently without delegating some responsibilities to the subject matter specialists, whose major function was to seek improvement of curriculum and of instruction.

How does the foreign language specialist seek improvement of instruction?

What are his assigned responsibilities?

How much time does he have to carry out his duties? Is he considered a teacher or an administrator?

Does he receive extra remuneration for his special services?

What is his educational background?

In order to answer these questions a study was undertaken to survey the Foreign Language Departments in the secondary schools of Western New York in order to identify the duties and practices of those responsible for the departmental leadership. A secondary aim was to determine the

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amount of released time from teaching to perform the departmental duties, and to establish the educational preparation and work experience possessed by those who filled the departmental leadership position.

The writer sent a questionnaire to the foreign language departments of 107 Secondary Public School Districts of Western New York and the responses yielded information from 89% of the districts and uncovered some answers to the following questions:

1. What is the official title of the person responsible for the Foreign Language Program?

The answer to this question depended upon the pupil enrollments, the number of teachers in the department, and the languages offered. The following pattern occurred:

7-12 School Enrollment	No. of Language Teachers	Languages Offered	Departmental Leader
1200- 1500	1-4	Spanish French	Teacher Consultant
1500- 4000	5-14	Spanish French German	Dept. Head or Chairman
4000- 7000	14-20	Spanish French German	Coordinator
7000-10,000	20-30	Spanish French German Others	Supervisor
10,000 and up	30 and up	Spanish French German Others	Director

2. Is there a difference of responsibilities expressed by the title?

An analysis of the data indicated:

Teacher Consultant: An experienced teacher in a small school district who is responsible for some administrative aspects of the department without receiving any renumeration or released time.

Department Head or Chairman: A teacher who holds the position of leadership in the Foreign Language Department. He is responsible to the principal, receives an average of $430.00 as renumeration for his extra duties and has an average of 80 minutes of released time per day to carry out his responsibilities.

Coordinator: A person who holds the position of leadership in the Foreign Language Department in the school district. He is responsible to the Assistant Superintendent in charge of instruction and to the principals of the individual buildings. There are no subordinate language leaders. He interviews prospective faculty members, recommends them for appointment, organizes professional meetings, and supervises probationary teachers. Together with the teachers he selects the textbooks and prepares the budgets. He may or may not teach. It is considered an administrative position.

Supervisor or Director: The person who holds the position of leadership in foreign languages on a district-wide

basis. There are subordinate Foreign Language leaders in the individual buildings. He does not teach and is responsible for classroom supervision, in-service training, curriculum development, and some budgeting. It is considered an administrative position.

3. Which type of leadership positions are used the most in Western New York?

The data of the school districts surveyed indicated that: 50% of the school districts have a Department Chairman, 30% a Department Head, 10% a Teacher Consultant, 6% a Supervisor-Director, and 4% a Coordinator.

4. Which degree do the foreign language teachers hold? How many years have they been in their present position and in teaching?

Sixty-two per cent of the Foreign Language leaders in Western New York hold a Master's Degree with an average of 24 graduage credit hours beyond the Master's Degree; 34% hold a B.A. plus 38 credit hours, and 4% hold a Doctor's Degree plus 6 credit hours. Their mean average years in the leadership position and in teaching is respectively 8 and 14.

5. How much time do Department Heads or Chairmen spend in teaching and in related activities for the improvement of instruction?

The following table indicates that most of the time is spent in teaching:

Activity	Percentage of Time
Classroom teaching	81
Curriculum development	5
Budgeting	3
In-service training	.5
Classroom supervision	3.5
Assisting new teachers	3
Other administrative duties	4

6. Do Department Heads or Chairmen participate in the selection of the teaching staff?

Sixty-four per cent of the districts indicated that their foreign language leader is participating in the selection of the departmental staff, while thirty-six per cent indicated the contrary.

7. Do Department Heads or Chairmen participate in the area of teacher class assignments?

67% - Yes 33% - No

8. Do Department Heads or Chairmen participate in the evaluation of teachers?

64% - Yes 36% - No

9. Is the recommendation of the Department Head or of the Chairman considered in granting teacher tenure?

65% - Yes 35% - No

10. Are Department Heads or Chairmen responsible for the preparation of a Department budget?

    84% - Yes 16% - No

11. Are Department Heads or Chairmen responsible for the departmental inventory?

    93% - Yes 7% - No

12. Are Foreign Language Aptitude Tests given?

    5% - Yes 95% - No

Conclusion

Most of the foreign language department leaders complained of not having enough released time to carry out their professional duties and felt that more time should be devoted in assisting new teachers, in developing in-service training, in supervising classroom teaching and articulating the curriculum. They wanted to be consulted in such important matters of staff selection, teacher assignments, teacher's evaluation and tenure recommendations. It seems that the majority of Foreign Language Leaders in Western New York are interested not only in facilitating the administrative and clerical routines, but in promoting better articulation, curriculum development, and helping the new teachers.